

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

GENERAL SICKLES.

We simply call attention to the Washington despatches in some of our contemporaries in reference to the relations of General Sickles towards the President, and deny upon authority the statement that there has been any "misunderstanding." All the interviews between General Sickles and the President have been especially friendly and cordial. We understand that the President took an early occasion after his inauguration, to tender to General Sickles various public employments. He was offered a command in one of the Southern States, which he declined; and the mission to Mexico, which, for domestic reasons, he was compelled also to decline. He was asked to accept the mission to Spain. The President has recognized in General Sickles a man of more than ordinary gifts, with a brilliant record during the war, and self-sacrificing in his devotion to the Republican party. Few men have been so strongly tempted. When President Johnson meditated his defection from the party which made him President, General Sickles was among the men he especially sought to seduce. He named him to a prominent foreign mission. He tendered him the Collectorship of the Port of New York, and we believe it was understood that he might have succeeded Mr. Stanton as Secretary of War. He was sent into the Carolinas at a critical time in the work of reconstruction. If he had carried out the spirit of Mr. Johnson's policy he might have paralyzed the loyal element in the States, and delayed, if not destroyed, their rehabilitation. No General was more patient, earnest, and liberal in his policy both towards the blacks and the whites. While with one hand he secured freedom to the oppressed, with the other he showed justice and magnanimity to the dominant Rebel party. His administration was brilliant and successful. He brought the Carolinas into proper relations with the Government. No States have been more thoroughly reconstructed. He was stricken down on the eve of the completion of the work, because he refused to obey the mandate of the President. Coming back to the Northern States, he gave his time and intellect to the consolidation of the Republican party, on the basis of universal suffrage, and especially to the nomination of General Grant as the candidate of that party. He was among the earliest supporters of General Grant for the Presidential nomination. Because of this record, General Sickles is now made a target for the virulent abuse of the enemies of freedom. He returns to civil life. Those who attacked him when he was a leader in the party of justice, now attack him as a private citizen. We regret to lose his counsels and his efforts at this time. There are few men so gifted now in public employment. The assaults made upon him will be regarded by his fellow-countrymen as the idle wind which passes by. General Sickles belongs to history. The nation which he has served so well will surround him in his retirement with its confidence and its support.

SPANISH OUTRAGES ON THE AMERICAN FLAG.

We can find but one explanation for the notoriously unwarranted proceedings of the Spanish cruisers in the neighboring waters of the island of Cuba. The seizure of the American brig Mary Lowell, while lying at Ragged Island in charge of the English customs officers; the landing of an armed force on the British territory of St. Pierre and Miquelon; the capture of the British schooner Jeff Davis while at sea, and the shooting of two of her passengers; the seizure of two passengers on board the American schooner Lizzie Major, while many leagues from shore, and taking them as prisoners to Calbarien, perhaps to be executed without trial; and the final decision of the Spanish Admiralty Court in Havana that the brig Mary Lowell is a legal prize, are all such flagrant violations of the law of nations that they can have but one interpretation, and that is that they are parts of a meditated design, the object of which has not been made apparent.

The Spanish naval officers are, in general, well-educated men, and are far from being so ignorant of military and naval law as the commission of these acts would seem to indicate. But even if those holding subordinate grades are not versed in international law, their superior officers are not only well read and apt in the use of its dusty tomes, but in the organization of the military and naval bureaus in Cuba ample provision is made for the constant intervention of competent legal skill in their proceedings. The plea of ignorance is therefore inadmissible, and some other reason for these flagrant outrages must be found. To our mind this exists in the conviction on the part of the Spanish authorities that they are incompetent to put down the existing revolution in Cuba, and that the best solution for their difficulties is to so complicate the matter with neighboring powers as to bring forcible intervention, and thus save the honor of Spain. It would be dishonorable to be whipped by Cuba assiduously; but to give up Cuba under a complicated pressure from the United States and England would not incur that stigma which would leave open the claim for remuneration, as intimated recently by our Madrid correspondent.

But whatever may be the motive of the Spanish officers in committing these outrages, the safety and integrity of the American flag upon the high seas and in the ports of a friendly nation must be secured. Mr. Fish may entertain grave fears that a course of proper self-respect on our part will involve us in unpleasant relations with England, France, and Spain; but the American people entertain no such tremors. They, on the other hand, have a pretty thorough conviction that it is time our Government did something effective towards making the Stars and Stripes a safe flag upon the ocean, as it was in the days of yore. No principles of maritime law are more clear or more universally admitted than that of the national jurisdiction extending to the distance of one marine league from the shore, and that when a ship is at sea beyond the marine league from shore she bears the flag of the territory of the nation whose flag she bears. These undoubted principles of maritime law cover all the cases we have cited above, and leave no doubt as to the course that should be pursued.

Action, and not discussion, is the only safe course for President Grant and his administration. Admiral Porter will give him much better advice than Mr. Hamilton Fish, with his admitted fears; and as the facts of the case of the Mary Lowell have been already placed before the Government, we look for no delay. She is an American vessel, was seized in British waters, had no possible claim that she is subject to Spanish jurisdiction. Events are crowding on the administration of General Grant, and he must meet them with vigor or be overwhelmed. By all means let these

questions be submitted for negotiation to the Navy Department, and let Admiral Porter be directed to give the reasons if they are wanted.

CANADA'S CHAGRIN.

The annexation of Canada is discussed with such earnestness by the radical press in the United States that the Canadians, if they were of a less phlegmatic turn, might well begin to shiver in their shoes. Whatever may be the secret convictions of intelligent Canadians in regard to the policy of the proposed measure, there can be no doubt that the prejudices of the Canadian people are very strongly against it. The Toronto Leader, speaking in behalf of this prejudice alone, affects to deride the annexation talk on both sides of the border:—"Not the ravings of a silly New Brunswicker, nor the unnatural excitement of the Nova Scotians, nor any number of annexation letters or dubious editorials," says the Leader, "are true indices of an annexation feeling in Canada. There is no such feeling. An odd person here and there may be fool enough to prate it. But the heart of the country is steadily opposed to it. It loves monarchical institutions; it venerates the mother country." All which leads us to infer that Canada is rather alarmed and stirred up by this subject already—as, indeed, she may be when she duly considers her unfortunate dependence upon the mother country, and the fact that the United States Government, as administered by an ambitious military President, is currently reported to intend to accept or snatch the new Dominion as a moderate offset to the Alabama claims. President Grant's acquisitive propensities were shadowed forth in the World's Washington correspondence some days ago; and the tone of radical journals like the Tribune, Herald, Times, Philadelphia, and others, in their small Commercial, indicates that those propensities are not altogether unpopular. Under the circumstances, the best recommendation we can offer to the Canadian press is that it devote itself, not to vain protests against a destiny which it might be impossible to avert, but to an immediate, systematic "crying up" of the value of that territory as a dwelling-place for good Americans. By this means the newspapers of the period in the New Dominion will obtain far more subscribers, and the land-owners of the period may more shekels for acres, when annexation in fact, and the hordes of New England shall pour across the border, than they otherwise will.

THE HAYTIEN PROJECT AND ITS INFLUENCE.

Although with the adjournment of Congress the Haytien project, in its triple guise of protection, purchase, and annexation, came to an end, yet so did not, probably, its insidious influence. We shall almost certainly see it again next December; for familiarity with a proposition, however odious, often paves the way to success, especially if the right sort of details are made manifest and the right sort concealed. It is in politics, sometimes, as in the poet's line, "we first endure, then pity, then embrace;" and it is something of a triumph for the San Domingo project that we have been able to "endure."

Of course, we do not mean to assert that in politics, as in physics, the action and reaction are equal and in opposite directions. "It is mathematically true; on the contrary, we hardly believe any "reaction" next year regarding the Banks project will induce Columbia to embrace as her children the sons of Hayti and daughters of Domingo. Still, the rebuff of the last session will not insure the abandonment of the mischievous project, which is more likely to be held in abeyance till something favorable "turns up."

Now, exactly how much humberg there is in the Haytien business, and how much wind in the San Domingo, it is hard to say. We only know that it has been pressed unobtrusively, despite universal popular disapproval; and we know that the very presentation of such projects injures our credit and good repute in the eyes of the world. It is with reason that the London Times declares that "it is through such discussions in the House as that on the protectorate of Hayti and St. Domingo that the American character is misrepresented;" and it is a truth which we feel quite as keenly as do transatlantic observers, that "the miscomprehensions of the majority are scarcely able to efface the memory of the wild theories that are broached, and apparently received with respect until the final decision is expressed."

The truth is—and it is a very annoying and shameful one—that the lobbies of the national Legislature have come to be the resort of all classes of foreign as well as native schemers. Baez, for example, takes it for granted that by adroit management he can foist off San Domingo upon us, and if not that, then at least Sanamas, in order to replenish his exhausted treasury, and thereby maintain some semblance of his insensate seal. That the protectorate proposition is overwhelmingly defeated, that the purchase project is not even ventured to come to a vote, are facts which do not destroy the bad moral influence exhaled by the very reception and discussion of such schemes in the House.

TAILS AND TIN-CANS.

An Assiniboin squaw is probably incapable of eradicating from her soul a hankering after the heavy ear-rings which make her hideous, and her manner is nearer to striking the stars with his lofty head when in war-paint and feathers than Horace felt after eating the dinners and hearing the praises of Mæcenæus. But, any week in the year, a procession through the streets of New York will avouch to the noting mind the presence of the same passions in the civilized as in the savage soul. It is the decorations as well as the duties of the members of our civic charitable societies which bind them together in the dusty streets, and fix the envious gaze of the crowd upon the walks. Nor need we complain if "soldier-clothes" are capable to increase a nation's martial ardor and add a perceptible glow to the patriotic fire which burns in freemen's breasts and guards their laws, their dominions, and their liberties. "Some pork will bile so," was the commentary of a rustic Solon upon a singular exhibition of nature's law. Some men are made so, is all that can be said in view of these exhibitions of a nature so human as to be almost universal.

Doubtless, the squaw's ear is prettier unpunched, its cartilage not stretched to the shoulder; but to be lovelier in her own and her lover's eyes, she punches and stretches the appendage to her tympanum. Doubtless the duskiest skin, like beauty itself, when unadorned is then adorned the most; but the warrior puts his war-paint and his feathers on, and does his duty better. Doubtless, sashes and bullion-fringe contribute nothing of their essence to the sweetness of human charity; yet these are often inseparable. Doubtless, buttons and epaulettes and gaudy coats are as earthly in their substance as the soul of their wearer is ethereal; yet buttons embellish military glory, and gory shreds back upon buttons something of its own heavenly lustre. It is only by the assistance of comparisons like these that one can comprehend the insatiable

greed of some men among us who enjoy real power, to be possessed of the symbols of fictitious emblems.

Here is Mr. Greeley, the creator of that party which has been thrice successful in our national elections, and the enceptor of the blacks, whose valor, as he was himself informed us, preserved our national unity—behold him still as anxious for the "ear-rings" of beauty and the "buttons" of power as when he dissolved partnership with the official whom he could create, whom he has destroyed, but whom he could never persuade to offer him places of adoration. That Mr. Greeley never gets his sash and epaulettes is not the point; but that he sighs for them. Could twenty Senators by their votes do much as he by the Tribune to make or mar a treaty on the Alabama claims? Certainly not; yet see him hankering after the gilded saloons of royalty, the dress-sword and the knee-breeches of diplomacy, and offering to muzzle the Tribune and take his orders from the Secretary of State, for the sake of quenching that insane thirst of a soul thus shown to be not above buttons.

Here is Mr. Dana, whose achievements in gymnastics are only paralleled by his exploits in literature. Not sufficient to him, however, is it that he has fastened his head upon an encyclopaedic enterprise and his legs upon a bicycle invention. The buttons of the mandarins will not suffer him to sleep, and he solicits from successive administrations the Collectorship of the Port as something which will raise him in his own esteem or in that of his fellow-men. Denied the Collectorship—to achieve so trifling an eminence as that of an official "appraiser," he is willing to sacrifice not merely Mr. Roberts' aspirations to be Secretary of the Navy and Mr. Conkling's to be Lieutenant-General of the Army of the United States, but what is his deepest ambition, the ambition of his own friends and former chief—the teacher who formed his nascent mind—to say nothing of what can alone console his dying hour when bullion shall have lost its gilt and buttons their shine, his true and nobler purpose to be the poet of gymnastics and the relict of poetry. It is not to Mr. Dana's failure, which his attacks on Johnson as now on Grant have betrayed, and which no "appraised" praise of Grant can now conceal, that we call attention—for what is worse than the curse of a grater prayer? but to the fact that thus he prays to be ended with the shirt, yet will wear an undershirt, of impotence, provided only that he may make ostentation of the buttons of power.

Here, again, is Mr. Parke Godwin, the author of a history of France which will be perused by the descendants of Napoleon when the White House is the coal-hole of an emperor, whose failure to be sent to Spain issues from the Post such dissertations on the need of virtue in the Navy Agency which a Henderson once probed, by, and of capacity in the mission to Spain, which John F. Hale has made merchandise of, as a manet draw tears from the eye of every reader, and curses from the lips of those whose eyes, like Grant's, are quite unused to weep; here is Mr. Godwin enjoying his life and perfecting his immortality in Paris, yet thought to be, by his intimate associates, willing to make the one a burden and the other a problem for the sake of passing "three months of winter and nine months of hell" in Madrid. That neither places of profit nor of prominence are able to be extorted by the Post from General Grant is not the point, but that he should seek to be a farthing and a painted post instead of a landmark which men drifting hither and thither might feel that it would do to tie to.

Besides the dogs which have had the misfortune to have tin-cans tied to their tails, we never heard that there was a superior breed which sought the opportunity but declined the ornament. But man is the paragon of animals; and though your Greeleys and your Danas go about railing for the cans which are soldered to their tails, the species is adorned by a Bennett, whose pride it was, when four years ago the mission to France was the tin-can of the period, to demand not an office indeed, but the offer of an office—not the actual can indeed, but, as a Channing eung,—"the delusive show of can."

Such a performance as this restores one's sense of the true dignity of human nature. Had Mr. Bennett made no effort to obtain that station, he might have left it doubtful to his contemporaries whether it was that he failed to share a common weakness of his tribe, or was insensible to the advantage that might be got by a timely and effective use of the same. Had he been tempted by the valid offer of the mission instead of being invited to perform his promise, to decline it, we might now have to mourn another fallen from his high estate. But by his actual course he permitted us to believe in the progress of the race, whilst affording us an accurate picture of his estimate of its present condition and ideals.

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